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CRIMINAL LAW SCHOLAR MOVES EAST

*Angela P. Harris
comes from Berkeley
to UB Law as Baldy's
first Distinguished
Visiting Scholar*

They say a change is better than a rest. So when Professor Angela P. Harris was looking forward to a sabbatical from Berkeley Law School at the University of California, she thought a change of scene might be in order.

"I love what I do," Harris says, "and it's recharging to think about doing it in a different place. It's a fun, nice way of getting to know a different faculty and getting to live in another part of the country."

Harris, a widely published legal scholar and award-winning teacher, will come to UB Law School this fall for a yearlong appointment as a Baldy Center Distinguished Scholar. That link with UB Law School's center for interdisciplinary legal studies fits well, she says, with her multifaceted approach to legal scholarship. Already, for example, she is talking with UB so-

ciology professor Mark Gottdiener about the launch of a new journal in urban sociology, in keeping with her interest in the workings of America's cities.

In addition to teaching an introductory course in criminal law, Harris will continue her research and writing, work on conferences and, she says, "get to know the faculty and the students."

Harris, whose undergraduate work was in creative writing and English literature at the University of Michigan, has a master's degree in social science from the University of Chicago. Her J.D. is from the University of Chicago Law School. She has taught at Berkeley Law since 1988, interrupted only by visiting professorships at Yale, Stanford and Georgetown.

She identifies herself broadly with the Critical Race Theory movement in legal scholarship, which looks at racial subordination and discrimination, and the intersection of race with other social phenomena. But she also identifies as a feminist and sees race as "inextricably intertwined" with gender discrimination – and says that these issues make for a lively classroom.

"Criminal law is so much about race, class, gender and sexuality," she says. "Who gets punished, what do we make criminal, where is the line between things that the community might consider just immoral and what the community might want to make illegal? It's a great course to teach, because everyone comes into it with some sort of opinion. All the

students have seen TV shows or maybe even had some personal experience with criminal law."

The confluence of race and gender has deep roots in our country, Harris says. "These two kinds of subordination have really been closely intertwined throughout American history," she says. "For example, during slavery, there was a rule first expressed in a Virginia statute that the status of a child followed the status of the mother. So slavery status would follow reproduction. Women's bodies were essential to the maintenance of slavery – they were engines that could produce more capital for the master."

Today, she says, even though both racial discrimination and sex discrimination in the workplace have been outlawed, race and gender bias continue to be uneasy dance partners. For example, an employer hiring for a certain position may be swayed by stereotypes and expectations that live below the conscious level: "Black women are too loud and sassy, I don't want them in my workplace; Asian women are too quiet and passive, I don't want them in a sales position."

Laws against discrimination are already on the books, Harris says. "The question is, how do you enforce that, how do you make it real?" One way, she says, is by "working through corporate culture and corporate training programs to help people get past those stereotypes. If people are reflective and aware that they may be subject to these stereotypes, they can get past them."



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At Berkeley Law, Harris serves on the board of the Berkeley Center for Race and Gender, a research institute for students and faculty looking at how issues of race and gender intertwine; as board chair of the Institute for the Study of Social Change, a university-wide umbrella for research; and on the executive committee of the Thelton E. Henderson Center for Law and Social Justice within the law school, which sponsors talks and workshops by practicing attorneys

from across the country for students interested in issues and careers in social justice.

Harris comes to Buffalo with her daughter, Rachel, 11; her partner, Christopher Young; and his daughter, Jasmine, who is also 11. The professor is also a musician – she plays the viola, and has “performed for years with a bunch of choirs” as a singer of both sacred and secular music.